

# Health Information Technology Initiatives in Nebraska

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*Excerpted with permission from the May 2007 issue of the Nebraska Office of Rural Health's Access Newsletter*

Several HIT initiatives are under way in Nebraska. CIMRO of Nebraska, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for the state of Nebraska, is working with several partners and physician practices across the state to prepare for the "electronic" future by assisting in the migration from paper-based health records to electronic health records, electronic medical records, and electronic registry systems.

One HIT initiative is the Doctor's Office Quality - Information Technology project. This project offers physician practice staff direction in moving toward HIT in the form of an EHR roadmap that separates EHR adoption into six individual components: assessment, planning, selection, implementation, evaluation, and improvement. Each component builds on the previous step to ensure details are not overlooked and the practice is able to move forward successfully. Through the EHR roadmap process, CIMRO of Nebraska assists participating practices with readiness assessments, workflow analysis, technical resources, system solutions, and quality improvement tools as they work to improve outcomes in the health of their patient populations.

Many physician office managers who have moved to EHRs comment they "would not go back to paper charts" once they have progressed past the implementation phase. They add, "The process takes a lot more time and effort than I initially thought," but they say they are "thrilled about not having to chase after paper charts."

Another HIT initiative is the Nebraska Registry Partnership (NRP). The partnership core members include CIMRO of Nebraska, Nebraska Health and Human Services System Office of Rural Health, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Diabetes Prevention and Control Program and Cardiovascular Health Program). This collaborative project was established to increase the number of Nebraska clinics tracking data on chronic diseases and includes use of a disease registry tool or an EHR.

The goal is to provide an integrated approach to improving care of chronic diseases including diabetes, heart failure, coronary artery disease, hypertension, osteoarthritis and preventive care. The partnership is working with eight pilot clinic sites to use a registry tool to identify patients with diabetes, implement evidence-based clinical best practices and improve outcomes for patients with diabetes. This summer, the clinics will expand data tracking to include cardiovascular disease measures. The partnership is currently accepting applications for the next clinics to join the project.

Physician office staff and healthcare providers have shared positive comments about implementation of the registry. One staff person noted, "The patient planner is a great tool for tracking the diabetes measures and completing the documentation."

The NRP is also coordinating efforts with the Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement Grant Project, which has funded registry tools across the country, including two rural clinics in Nebraska. These grants are funded through the Health Resources and Services Agreement (HRSA) of which 15 were awarded nationally. Another registry project is through the National Physicians Foundation, which includes the Nebraska Medical Association. Two clinics in Nebraska, one urban and one rural, are working with the project.

The project working with clinic staffs, the NRP, HRSA and the Physician's Foundation grant projects are each working to promote the adoption of HIT in physician offices. These projects assist physician office staff in identifying current practice design, workflow and team building to move forward with HIT adoption with the

long-term goal of improving patient outcomes. Improved patient-clinician communications and enhanced access to patient information, decision support and reference data are the means to achieving that goal. To successfully achieve sustained improvement in healthcare, physician practices will need to redesign processes to include standardized, predictable actions that are evidenced-based and incorporate an integrated HIT system that enhances quality, safety and performance.

*This material was prepared by CIMRO of Nebraska, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Nebraska, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 8SOW-NE-PHYS-0747/0407*